

A year later, no myth remains for Loveland intersection

CFI design was imported but works well for Loveland

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Aerial view of Madison Avenue and Eisenhower Boulevard in Loveland on Jan. 21, 2011. (RICHARD M. HACKETT)

Mythology is cast aside, and the worst fears of commuters using the year-old intersection of Eisenhower Boulevard and Madison Avenue have been dispelled.

City traffic engineers who have warily tracked the traffic through the "continuous-flow" intersection (CFI) for the past year have the numbers on their side.

"There was some level of urban myth about increased accidents there," said city engineer Tom Knostman, the manager of the CFI project. "Our goal from the beginning was to move the traffic safely, and we've accomplished that."

The intersection is one of the city's most notorious bottlenecks. Delays on turns from Madison onto Eisenhower, and long waits at stoplights on Eisenhower, had been dogging drivers for years.

But the imported CFI solution, previously installed in Utah and Louisiana, has solved the problem.

Tweaks to the design have been needed: A merge lane taking traffic from Eisenhower to northbound Madison now has a red or flashing-yellow light to guide traffic.

And the intersection of Madison and Nickel Drive, the entrance to the Sam's Club/Home Depot retail center, has been redesigned to keep drivers in line with the new design.

Critics of the intersection, one that takes two lanes of left-turning traffic on southbound Madison through an improbable split to eastbound Eisenhower, were vocal when it opened.

But they're more quiet now.

"I was against that design from the beginning, because it seemed like it would be a mess," said Wes Wynton, whose commute to a job in Greeley from north Loveland takes him through the intersection daily.

"But it works. It's functional and easy to understand once you get used to it. And that took about a day."

The alternative, a traffic circle or roundabout at the intersection, would have been much more costly than the \$4 million tab for the CFI.

During the first six months of 2011, 13 accidents were recorded at the intersection.

Most of them were associated with left-turning traffic from Eisenhower onto Madison and not related to the unusual traffic flow on southbound and northbound Madison.

That compares to 2009's total of 26 accidents at the intersection. Because the intersection was under construction for much of 2010, the numbers don't compare well.

Among the accidents during 2010 was a fatal motorcycle accident at Madison and Nickel Drive, one of the worst spots for wrecks during the period prior to the CFI's installation.

The city continues to watch the intersection and make changes that traffic patterns dictate.

"The biggest factor was to move traffic from southbound Madison onto Eisenhower, and that's moving right along," Knostman said. "We continue to make adjustments to improve the timing, and it's working well."

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